

# Moral Libertarian Principles can Resolve Issues Beyond the Limits of Classical Libertarianism

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Libertarianism has traditionally relied on the Non-Aggression Principle (NAP) to resolve all issues. The NAP states that nobody can initiate violence against another. In practice, it also means that government authority (and therefore potential violence) in all issues is to be disallowed, except for protection against violent crime and violent destruction of private property. Good as the NAP sounds, more and more people are finding it very inadequate for solving a variety of issues in the modern world.

People have been turning to libertarianism for its apparent fairness, because it is an ideology that treats individuals as individuals with equal standing. In libertarianism, there is no governmental exceptionalism (i.e. the government does not have a right to act beyond the NAP), no structural unfairness or reverse discrimination allowed (e.g. the so-called 'progressive stack'), and no ability to justify such structural unfairness on Orwellian Newspeak. It is therefore refreshing for many. However, the lack of practicality in the application of the NAP ultimately leads many to abandon libertarian ideals.

Ultimately, disallowing violence except for self-defence is an expression of the equal standing of human beings, and it is this equal standing of human beings as individuals that leads to the disallowance of centrally planned economies, reverse discrimination dressed up as social justice, and the like. Therefore, I believe that the principle of Equal Moral Agency (EMA) that moral libertarianism is based on is actually similar to the NAP in spirit, but allows more practical application in a wide variety of areas.

**Here are a few examples of what I mean:**

## Drug Policy

In classical libertarianism, there is simply no scope to have a debate on drug policy at all. The NAP requires that there can be no prohibition against any drug being legally available on a commercial basis. Since the provision of such 'goods' do not involve violence, there can be no government authority (and therefore potential violence) to stop it. However, for most people, this is a woefully inadequate approach to such a controversial and sensitive problem.

On the other hand, the Equal Moral Agency (EMA) approach allows a healthy debate. Does allowing a commercial market for 'recreational' drugs increase or decrease the equality of moral agency? On

one hand, it increases the freedom of the individual against government regulation, therefore increasing the equality of moral agency. On the other hand, it allows companies to market addictive and potentially harmful substances for the purpose of making an ongoing profit. You could legitimately argue that, once people are addicted to the product, they certainly don't have Equal Moral Agency to the company selling it.

## Animal Rights

Animal rights are another area where libertarianism is often thought to be lacking. Put it simply, classical libertarianism does not allow any animal rights at all, because ill-treatment of animals is not associated with violence between citizens in any way. However, this attitude is seen as repulsive by the vast majority of the general population.

On the other hand, moral libertarianism and the EMA principle is grounded in the need to allow each individual full and equal moral agency, to act out their sincerely held moral vision as much as possible without interference from collective pressure. Since there can be no argument that ill-treatment of animals advance any morally useful purpose, laws banning such actions are not against the EMA principle. Conversely, one can argue that the government, which has the right of rule over the land, has therefore a responsibility to protect the 'natural environmental elements' in the land, and the decision as to how to achieve this goal should be one based on democratic mandate, like all other 'unavoidably collective' issues.

## Financial Sector Fraud and Regulation

In classical libertarianism, there isn't much scope for government regulation of the financial sector, because financial transactions are non-violent. However, in recent years, bad practices in the financial sector has led to the ruin of many lives across the world. Just sitting there and saying you can't do anything about it will clearly not be acceptable to many people. On the other hand, the Equal Moral Agency (EMA) approach allows government regulation to clamp down on financial sector fraud and malpractice, to restore customers' equal share of moral agency.

## In Conclusion

The principle of Equality of Moral Agency (EMA) is indeed different from the Non-Aggression Principle (NAP), and therefore they don't always produce the same policy conclusions. However, EMA is actually based on the same individualistic and 'morally egalitarian' spirit as the NAP. Using the EMA principle to think about issues fosters the same individualistic, non-biased and non-affirmative attitude as using the NAP, but the EMA allows much more ground to consider issues and points of view that are generally considered important in broader society.

Of course, strict thin libertarians and especially thin libertarian immediatists would strongly disagree with using the EMA in place of the NAP. However, we are not all strict thin libertarians, and when given the choice between NAP-based libertarianism and other conventional ideologies, over 95% of the population would rather choose other conventional ideologies and forego the individualism, objectivity, and anti-tribalism found in libertarianism. The EMA approach of Moral Libertarianism provides an alternative that allows people to embrace these values even if they cannot embrace NAP-based libertarianism.